PATTERNS OF POWER

Position Logic

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The Method Beneath the Volumes — That a Person in a Position Decides, With the Materials at Hand, by What He Counts as Benefit Against What He Counts as Cost; That His Benefit Is Fixed by What He Values and a Cost Binds Only Where He Is Credibly Held to It; and That, Beneath Both, His Position Fixes the Field of the Visible — What He Can See, Know, and Even Consider — So That Reading a Choice Means Recovering Not Only What He Valued and What It Could Cost Him but What He Could See From Where He Stood; a Lens and a Tendency, Never a Law, Held as Tested, Not Revealed

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A STUDY IN THE PATTERNS OF POWER

Preface

This paper is unlike the studies it stands among: it is not a case but the statement of the method that runs beneath all of them — used on every page of this project, and here set down plainly so that it too can be argued with. The idea is simple, and the whole point of stating it is to let the simplicity show, to set it out in the order it is actually used, and to correct the recurring temptation to render so human a thing in black and white, as an iron law, when it is a lens and a tendency and nothing more.

The simplicity begins with a refusal. Almost every grand account of human events explains them by removing the human — a providence directing from above, a History marching to a destination, a spirit of the age, an invisible hand, a class-mind doing the deciding while the actual people serve as its medium. The wager of the method is that you never need such an agent above people's heads, because you cannot take the human out of human civilisation: everything in it is done by human beings, one at a time, each deciding from where he stands, by what he counts as benefit against what he counts as cost. The engine is economic only in that grammar of weighing — not in the thin sense that people want money; benefit is whatever a person values, and very often not material at all.

This version makes one addition to the statement the project has used before, and the addition is the reason for the rewrite. The older statement said that a person's position fixes his *menu* — the options open to him and the costs attached to each — and that to read his decision you reconstruct that ledger as it looked from where he stood. That is true, and it is kept. But it is not deep enough, because it begins one step too late. Before a person can weigh the options his position offers, his position has already decided something more basic: what he can *see* — which facts reach him, which pos-

sibilities occur to him at all, which features of his world stand out as features and which never rise into view. A position fixes not only the logic of a decision but the *field of the visible* from which the logic is run. The farmer a mile inland and the fisherman at the shore look on the same ocean, but only one of them has ever had to know the tide; to the other it is not a false belief but an absent one, a thing his position never once handed him to think about. Position, in a word, gives you your epistemology before it gives you your options — and this paper threads that recognition through the whole method, because a choice cannot be read until you have recovered not merely what a person valued and what it could cost him, but what he was, and was not, in any position to see.

The rest follows as before, now carrying the addition. Values cannot be read directly, so the method reaches first for formation — which sets the benefit dial early and, we shall see, draws the horizon early too. A cost binds only where a credible enforcer can reach the actor and he believes it. Reading a position lets you see the logic of a decision — Henry, Stalin, and Hideyoshi, whose invasion answers the theorist's single cause with a convergence of many. Like positions converge with no shared mind, because a problem has only so many good solutions and a vantage only so many visible ones. And because the decider is human, and his values and his horizon alike can change, the method stays a baseline and not a cage. It is held, like everything here, as tested, not revealed.

A Note on this Collaboration

The method, and its name, are Thomas J. Bryan's, and so is the order in which this version states it. He supplied the governing wager — that you cannot take the human out of human civilisa-

tion, that every account reaching for providence or History or an impersonal force smuggles an agent above people's heads to do what only people do, and that the sufficient unit is a single human being, unchanged across the span of civilisation, deciding by benefit against cost with the materials at hand. He insisted the engine is economic only in its grammar and never in its anthropology; that formation sets the benefit dial while the sword and the community set the cost dial; that a position once understood usually makes the logic of a decision visible; that like positions converge with no class-mind; and, above all, that because values can change the method is a baseline and never an iron law. The recognition this version builds out — that a position fixes the field of the visible itself, and that the image for it is the tide known to the man on the water and unknown to the man a mile inland — grew out of this collaboration and is here promoted from an aside in the project's theoretical papers to a load-bearing part of the method.

The model's work has been to set the method down in its fuller form, to research and verify the cases that carry it, and to hold at every step the discipline the method demands of itself: read the value, and now also the horizon, from evidence prior to the act; treat deviations as findings; claim the tendency and never the law. The repeated correction this version makes against its predecessors is the refusal of the black-and-white — people are not robots, two people in one position may choose oppositely, and the lens shows the logic, never the verdict. The whole is held as tested, not revealed.

The Argument in Nine Parts

1 — The Wager. Nearly every grand account explains human events by removing the human — a providence, a History, a spirit of

the age, an invisible hand, a class-mind. The wager is the refusal: you can never take the human out of human civilisation, for everything in it is done by single human beings, one at a time, each deciding from where he stands.

2 — The Engine and the Two Caveats. The whole method is one sentence — a person in a position decides, with the materials at hand, by benefit against cost — and two caveats turn it into an instrument: benefit is fixed by what he values, and a cost binds him only where he is credibly held to it. These are the slack where the human enters.

3 — What the Position Lets You See. Beneath the menu lies the field of the visible: a position fixes not only the options and their costs but what a person can know, consider, and even perceive as a fact — the tide that the man on the water must know and the man a mile inland never once considers. The horizon feels total from inside, which is why the same world honestly yields different pictures to differently placed people; and because one can only weigh what is in one's field, the horizon is upstream of the ledger, and whoever governs what reaches a position governs the decision before the weighing begins.

4 — Formation: the Best First Reading. Since values cannot be read directly, formation is the best first reading of them — and the deepest setter of the horizon besides, installing not only what a person will count as good but what he will count as obvious, as a fact, as unthinkable. This is a durable hierarchy's greatest advantage: to form a person is to set the benefit dial and draw the field of the visible early, while the sword and the community set the cost dial.

5 — When a Cost Is Real. A cost bears on a decision only where a credible power will impose it and the actor believes it will fall. This is all a counterweight is; and where no power keeps the account, the cost column stands empty and the strong simply do as they please — the mirror of the part before it, where what no information can reach, the horizon never contains.

6 — Reading the Position to See the Logic. One rarely knows what a man valued or could see, but one can reconstruct his position, and from it both the logic and the horizon of his decision usually become visible: Henry needing an heir and money, Stalin needing to keep power, and Hideyoshi, against the theorist's single cause, pressed by many pressures that all pointed to one invasion.

7 — Convergence, and Why History Rhymes. The patterns that recur across unconnected civilisations are not a law of history or cultural borrowing but position-logic at scale: a position poses a problem, the problem has only so many good solutions, and a vantage shows only so many of them, so like positions converge — Diocletian and Tokugawa, the Holy Roman Empire and the Maya. A tendency and never a law; and the same logic yields the default and the coordination that comes only with threat — and shows why a nominal class converges and fragments by position, never by a collective mind.

8 — Values Can Change, and So Do Horizons. The escape from determinism: formation is a baseline and not a cage; people convert, and when their values change the whole reckoning changes with them — the Marxists the clearest case. And horizons move more readily still, for a man set in a new position is

shown a new field, so the analyst must keep asking not only whether the values he reads are the values now held but whether the world the actor saw is the world the actor sees.

9 — The Discipline, and What It Is For. What keeps so flexible an instrument honest — reading the value and the horizon from evidence prior to the act, treating a deviation from a known formation as a window, and remembering that the analyst, too, judges from a position, his hindsight a vantage no actor ever had. Shown in the students who carried a doctrine home from Paris, one applying it to catastrophe and one breaking from it for his people. Not a tidy theory that has solved its subject, but a way of making even the most terrible act legible. Debug, do not defend. Tested, not revealed.

A Note on Sources

This paper states the method the rest of the project assumes, and so it draws less on new sources than on the corpus and the standard historical record.

The cases of position. Henry VIII's need of a male heir and of money, and the break with Rome that answered both; Stalin's show trials and Great Terror, with the doctrine of the intensifying class struggle that licensed an ever-stronger rather than a withering state; and Toyotomi Hideyoshi's invasion of Korea, on which the historians record a convergence of pressures — the employment of idle samurai, the draining and distancing of the great vassals, the legitimation of a low-born ruler, the inherited ambition for empire, and the binding of a new realm against a common foe — are drawn from the standard record. The convergence cases — Diocletian and Tokugawa Ieyasu solving the warlord's dilemma, the Holy Roman Empire and the Classic Maya building the sacred decentralised polity an ocean apart

— are developed in this project's studies "The Warlord's Dilemma" and "Sacred Fragmentation"; the students of the Paris apparatus, Khieu Samphan and Aimé Césaire, in "The Paris Apparatus" and "The Error They Carried Home."

The conceptual kin. The first caveat, that benefit is undefined until one knows what a person values, is kin to Amartya Sen's critique of the narrow self-interested chooser; the second, that a cost binds only where credibly enforced and believed, to Thomas Schelling's analysis of the credible threat; the account of installed value stands on the work of Philip Tetlock and colleagues on sacred values. The new movement of this version — that a position fixes the field of the visible — has its own lineage: the recognition, as old as Adam Smith's remark that men's understandings are *formed by their ordinary employments*, that a person's place narrows what he can know; Friedrich Hayek's account of knowledge as irreducibly dispersed, so that no mind holds the whole and each must trust what it cannot check; and the project's own theoretical papers, "The Cheapest Hold" and "The Necessary Seam," where the image of the tide and the argument that the division of labour is also a division of knowing were first set down. The framework these serve is developed across the project's foundational papers, above all "The Machine That Runs Itself." This version replaces earlier and more convoluted statements, and is offered, like the method itself, to be argued with.

PART 1

The Wager

> *That nearly every grand account of human events explains them by removing the human — a providence directing from above, a History marching to its destination, a spirit of the age, an invisible hand, a class-mind — and that the whole wager of this method is the refusal: that you can never take the human out of human civilisation, because everything in it is done by single human beings, one at a time, each deciding from where he stands*

THIS PAPER IS UNLIKE THE STUDIES IT STANDS AMONG, FOR it is not a case but the statement of the method that runs beneath all of them — used on every page of this project, and here set down plainly so that it too can be argued with. The idea is simple, and the whole point of stating it is to let the simplicity show; but the simplicity begins, oddly, with a refusal, and the refusal is the thing most worth getting right, because almost every grand account of human events gets it wrong in the same direction. Open any sweeping explanation of why a civilisation rose or fell, why a people did what it did, and you will usually find, somewhere near the centre of it, an agent that is not a person: a providence directing events from above, a History marching toward its appointed destination, a spirit of the age moving through a population, an invisible hand arranging the market's outcomes, a class-mind deciding on behalf of millions who serve as its limbs. Each of these is a way of explaining a human world by quietly removing the humans from it — installing, above their heads, some larger thing that does the actual deciding while the people below merely carry it out.

The wager of this method is that you never need such an agent, and that reaching for one is the standing temptation to be resisted, because it explains a human world by subtracting the only thing in it that decides. You cannot take the human out of human civilisation. Everything that happens within it — the cathedral and the massacre, the tax revolt and the dynasty, the slow consolidation and the sudden collapse — is done by human beings, one at a time, each choosing what to do from where he stands. The great patterns are real, and this project spends most of its pages tracing them; but a pattern is not an agent. It is what a multitude of separate human decisions adds up to when the picture is seen from far enough away, and the distance is the only thing that ever made it look like fate. Bring the lens back down to where the deciding actually happens and there is no spirit of the age in the room — only a person, in a position, weighing what he takes as benefit against what he takes as cost, and choosing.

And the unit is not just a human being but the same human being everywhere: the mind reading this sentence is, in its architecture, the mind that raised the first walls and argued in the first assembly, for no biological change in the animal has done, or could have done, the explanatory work that providence and History are wheeled in to do. From this one premise follows a severe discipline — that the same psychology must be granted to everyone, king and commissar and ploughman and bishop alike, the vast differences in their conduct flowing not from different kinds of mind but from different positions, different things valued, and, as this version will insist, different fields of the visible poured into the one machine. This is what forbids the lazy exits by which analysis escapes its work: that the tyrant was a monster, the mob mad, the believer a fool, the foreigner simply other. Each of those ends the inquiry exactly where it should begin, and sends the analyst back, every time, to the questions that actually explain a human act: what did this person value, what could it cost him — and, before either can bite, what could he see from where he stood.

One misreading must be headed off at the outset, because the engine is built of cost and benefit and that vocabulary already has an owner in most readers' minds. The method is economic in one exact sense and in no other. It is economic in its grammar: a person weighs what he takes to be the benefit of a course against what he takes to be its cost, and acts on the balance. It is emphatically not economic in the usual sense — it does not hold that what people want is money, nor that conduct is driven in the last instance by the means of production, nor that a material base secretly authors the beliefs sitting on top of it. The benefit a person actually pursues is whatever he values, and what he values is very often not material at all: it is salvation, or honour, or the safety of his children, or the purity of a doctrine, or the good opinion of the people whose regard he cannot do without. The miser and the martyr run the identical engine; they differ only in what sits in the benefit column. To call the martyr irrational because he will not take the money is simply to mistake the contents of one's own benefit column for the structure of the human mind. The method borrows the economist's spare grammar of weighing and refuses his thin anthropology of the money-maximising man, and in the same motion it parts from the Marxist, with whom it shares the instinct that material position shapes conduct, but from whom it keeps the human chooser and discards the two things that would take the human out — the base that determines the mind, and the class that thinks as one.

PART 2

The Engine and the Two Caveats

> *That the whole of the method is one sentence — a person in a position decides, with the materials at hand, by what he counts as benefit against what he counts as cost — and that two caveats turn the sentence from a truism into an instrument: that to know his benefit you must know what he values, whatever the source of that value, and that a cost binds him only where he is credibly held to it, or believes he will be*

The engine itself can be stated in a single sentence. A human being occupies a position in a structure; that position lays before him a set of possible actions and the materials at hand; and he chooses by weighing what he takes to be the benefit against what he takes to be the cost. That is the whole of it. There are no laws of history acting over his head, no forces moving as agents, no class descending upon him — only a person, in a position, deciding with what the position puts within his reach. The phrase *with the materials at hand* is not decoration, and a later part will press it harder than it has been pressed before: a man does not choose from the set of all conceivable actions but from the far narrower set his position actually presents him, with the tools, the allies, the precedents, and — most easily overlooked of all — the *information and the very concepts* his moment happens to supply. This is why the same problem yields a different-looking solution in two different centuries, and why the convergences this method will later trace are convergences of shape and never of detail.

Stated baldly the engine explains nothing, because everyone runs it; what turns the truism into an instrument is two caveats, and they are the whole of what must be filled in before it can turn. The first caveat concerns the benefit side, and it is the deeper of the two and the one most easily missed: benefit is not given in the world. What counts to a person as a benefit depends entirely on what that person values — so that to know what will weigh as a benefit for a given man, you must first know what he values, and nothing in the bare engine tells you that. This is a point about the structure of the calculation and not yet about where values come from; the question of their source is a separate matter, taken up in the part on formation, and it must be kept separate, because the first caveat holds whatever the source. A man who values the wrong thing by your lights is not running a broken engine; he is running the same engine on a different benefit column, and until you have read that column you cannot predict him at all.

The second caveat is the mirror of the first and concerns the cost side: a possible cost is not given either. A cost weighs upon a decision only where the actor is actually held to it, or credibly believes he will be and takes the threat as real. A cost no one will impose is no cost at all and weighs nothing; and a cost that is real but that the actor does not believe in weighs nothing either, until he is taught otherwise. These two — a value to fix the benefit, a credited accountability to fix the cost — are the slack in the system, the place where the human enters, and they are the reason two people in the identical position are not interchangeable parts. The same seat yields opposite conduct in two men who value different things: in the court of Henry VIII, Thomas Cromwell drafted the oath and Thomas More went to the block rather than swear it, the same position holding both the architect and the martyr, because what each counted as the unbearable cost and the thing not to be surrendered was not the same. And the same act costs one man everything and another nothing, depending only on who can reach him and whether he knows it.

Here the method must own an honest difficulty before it claims anything: in real time both caveats are hard to read. Watching a living person decide, you have no direct access to what he values, and you cannot always tell whether the cost that ought to restrain him will in fact be imposed or believed. This is the central problem of judging people as they act rather than after the fact — and the parts that follow are, in effect, the things that make the reading possible: formation, which gives the best first estimate of the values; accountability, which tests whether the cost is real; the reconstruction of a position, which shows the logic a decision followed; and the record of others in like positions, which shows what people so placed have tended to do. But there is a third thing the bare two-caveat engine leaves out, and it sits beneath both caveats rather than beside them, because it governs what there is to weigh in the first place. Before a man can index a benefit to his values or discount a cost by its credibility, the options and the facts have to be *present to him* — in his field, available to be weighed at all. The two caveats describe how a person weighs what is before him. They are silent on what gets to be before him, and that silence is what the next part is for.

PART 3

What the Position Lets You See

> *That beneath the menu of a person's options lies something prior and more decisive — the field of the visible, the part of the world his position lets him see at all; that a position fixes not only what a man may do and what it costs him but what facts reach him, what possibilities occur to him, what stands out as a fact and what never rises into view, so that the tide the man on the water must know is, to the man a mile inland, not a false belief but an absent one; that this field feels total from inside, its edge mistaken for the edge of the world; and that because a man can weigh only what is in his field, the field lies upstream of the whole ledger, so that to read a decision you must recover not only what he valued and what it could cost him but what he could see from where he stood*

The two caveats tell you how a person weighs the options before him; they do not tell you how the options came to be before him, or why some never appeared at all, and that prior question turns out to be the deeper one. A position does not merely hand a person a menu of actions with prices attached. Before it does that, and more fundamentally than it does that, it draws the boundary of what he can see — the field of facts that reach him, of possibilities that occur to him, of features of the world that stand out to him as features rather than dissolving into an unnoticed background. Call it the field of the visible, the horizon of the position. It is set before any weighing begins, and it decides what there is to weigh. A man cannot count as a benefit a good he has never conceived, nor discount a cost from a danger he cannot see, nor choose an action that has

NEVER CROSSED HIS MIND; AND WHICH GOODS HE CONCEIVES, which dangers he sees, which actions cross his mind are not free to him but fixed, in their largest outlines, by where he stands. Position gives a person his epistemology before it gives him his options. That is the recognition this part adds to the method, and it changes how every decision in the project must be read.

The image to hold is the tide, and it is worth dwelling on, because its whole force is in a distinction that is easy to blur. Consider a fisherman at the shore and a farmer a mile inland, looking on the same sea. The fisherman knows the tide in his body — its turning and its set, its springs and its neaps, the hour the flats can be walked and the hour the channel fills — not because he is cleverer than the farmer but because his position puts him on the water, where the tide is the daily fact that feeds him or drowns him. The farmer may live his whole life beside that same sea and never form a single precise thought about the tide. And here is the point that matters: the farmer does not hold a *wrong* belief about the tide. He holds *no* belief about it. The tide is not an error in his picture of the sea; it is simply not in his picture at all, because his position never once handed it to him as a thing to be thought about. Ask him and he would say the sea is just — there: a flat blue edge to the land, always more or less where it was. He is not mistaken. He is unvisited by the question. The tide lies entirely outside the field his position drew, and the most striking thing about that field, to the man inside it, is that it does not feel like a field at all. It feels like the whole of the sea.

This is the feature of the horizon that does the most analytic work and is the most often missed: it feels total from the inside. A person does not experience the limits of his vantage as limits, does not see his blind spots as blind spots, because the blind spot is precisely the place from which no signal arrives to announce that something is missing. The edge of what his position lets him see is mistaken, silently and without exception, for the

edge of what there is. This is why two honest people standing in two positions can look on one world and report two different worlds, each complete, each obvious, each held with full conviction — and why neither is lying and neither is a fool. The merchant and the priest, the soldier and the clerk, the colonised and the coloniser, the man who must make the payroll and the man who must make the sermon, are not running different engines or suffering different quantities of intelligence; they are standing in different positions, and each has been shown a different field of the visible and handed it as the whole. The disagreement that looks, from outside, like one party seeing clearly and the other refusing to, is very often two parties each seeing all of what their position shows and neither able to see that there is more — two farmers, each certain about the sea, neither having stood where the tide is.

There is a structural reason this condition is universal and not a quirk of the inattentive, and it is the reason the project's theoretical papers reach for at this point: in any society complex enough to divide its labour, knowing itself divides. No single person can hold or check more than a sliver of what his society runs on; the physician trusts the engineer for the bridge and the engineer trusts the physician for the body, and each is, outside his own narrow competence, in the farmer's position with respect to a thousand tides he will never see. The division of labour that makes a complex society productive is also a division of *knowing* that leaves every member of it — the most learned included — dependent on an enormous body of fact he cannot personally verify and largely cannot even survey. The horizon, then, is not a failure of particular minds to look harder. It is the standing condition of any finite person in a world too large to see whole, and it is deepened, not relieved, by advancement, because the more finely a society divides its labour the narrower each person's sliver of direct sight becomes. Position-as-epistemology is not a moral about lazy farmers. It is the cognitive shape of civilisation itself.

The relation of this field to the menu of the older statement must be made exact, because the field is not just a longer menu but a different and prior thing. The menu is the set of actions a person could take and the costs attached to each; it answers the question *what can he do.* The field of the visible answers the logically earlier question *what is there, for him, to do anything about* — which facts, which options, which dangers, which goods are present to him at all. The menu lives inside the field; an option that lies outside the field is not a costly option he declines but a non-option he never reaches, exactly as the tide is not an expensive thing the farmer ignores but an absent thing he never weighs. And this is why the field is upstream of the whole ledger of benefit and cost. The two caveats operate only on what is already in the field: a man indexes a benefit to his values, but only among the goods he can conceive; he discounts a cost by its credibility, but only among the dangers he can see. Everything outside the field enters the calculation at not merely zero weight but no weight, because it never enters the calculation at all. To read a decision, therefore, one must reconstruct two things and in this order: first the field — what was even visible from where he stood — and only then, within it, the ledger of what he valued and what it could cost him. Skip the first and the second will mislead, because you will be pricing options the actor never saw and crediting him with blindness to facts that had not been invented or had never reached his shore.

From this follows a corollary as dark as the one the method draws on the cost side, and the two are mirror images. On the cost side, the method will say that where no power can keep the account against a man, his cost column stands empty and he does as he pleases; the emptying of the cost column is the opening of every door. On the side of the field, the parallel is this: whatever cannot reach a person's position, his horizon never contains — and so whoever governs what reaches a position governs what that position can know, and therefore the logic that can be run from it, before any weighing begins. To control a man's field of the visible is a deeper and

quieter power than to threaten his cost column, because the threatened man at least knows he is being moved, whereas the man whose horizon has been drawn for him experiences the drawn horizon as simply the world, and defends its edges as the edges of reality. This is the individual face of what the project's larger argument calls the management of belief and the seam through which a population's knowing must pass: at the scale of a civilisation it is an apparatus; at the scale of one decision it is just this, that a person can be governed most cheaply not by changing his ledger but by drawing the field within which his ledger is kept. The farmer can be left perfectly free to weigh whatever he likes about the sea, so long as no one ever shows him the tide.

Two threads run forward from here and are picked up where they belong. The first is that the earliest and deepest drawer of any person's field is his formation, which installs not only what he will count as good — the benefit dial of the next part — but what he will count as a fact, as obvious, as unthinkable, handing him a horizon before he is old enough to know a horizon is being handed to him. The second is a discipline the analyst must turn upon himself, taken up at the end: that he, too, judges from a position with a field of its own, and that the historian's position is a peculiar one, granting him a sight of the whole board, after the fact, that no actor on it ever had — so that the standing temptation of all hindsight is to convict the actor of not seeing what only the analyst's late and privileged vantage reveals. Hold both threads for now. The immediate gain is already large: that the first question to ask of any decision is not what the person wanted or feared but what, from where he stood, he could possibly have seen — and that a great many acts which look from outside like madness, stupidity, or evil become legible the instant one stops pricing them against a world the actor was never shown.

PART 4

Formation: the Best First Reading

> *That since a person's values cannot be read directly, the analyst's best first reading of them is his formation — the values installed before he could weigh them; that formation is, besides, the earliest and deepest drawer of his field of the visible, installing not only what he will count as good but what he will count as a fact, as obvious, as simply the way of things; and that this double power is a durable hierarchy's greatest advantage, for to form a person is to set the benefit dial and draw the horizon early, while the sword and the community together set the cost dial, so that a well-formed people comes to want what keeps the arrangement standing and to find the alternative not so much forbidden as unthinkable*

THE FIRST CAVEAT SAYS THAT TO READ A MAN YOU MUST know what he values; it does not say where those values come from, and that is the question this part answers, because the answer is both the analyst's best tool and, turned toward politics, the deepest mechanism of rule. If benefit is indexed to what a person values, and values cannot be read off a face in real time, then the analyst needs a source for them, and the best one available is formation. A person's values are installed — by family, by community, by the institutions he is born among — before he is in any position to weigh them, and they arrive not as proposals to be assessed but as the very standard by which all later proposals will be assessed. This is why the student of a living situation, lacking the historian's luxury of inferring a man's values backward from how things turned out, reaches first for formation: to know how a person was raised, in what creed and what class

and what account of the world, is to hold the most reliable first estimate available of what now sits in his benefit column. It is an estimate and not a certainty — a later part will show that values change — but it is the strongest starting point the method has, and in real time a strong starting point is most of the battle.

What the older statement of the method did not say, and what the part before this one now obliges it to say, is that formation does a second thing at least as consequential as setting the values, and does it at the same stroke: it draws the field of the visible. The institutions that install what a child will count as good also install what he will count as a *fact* — what is real, what is possible, what is obvious, what is simply the way of things and so never rises to the level of a question. The creed that teaches him what to honour also teaches him what to perceive: which events are significant and which are noise, which arrangements are natural and which are unthinkable, which authorities are to be trusted as a matter of course and which sources are not even to be consulted. A person is not merely given his benefit column in formation; he is given his whole picture of the sea, the tide left in or drawn out of it according to where his formation placed him. And because, as the part before showed, a horizon feels total from inside, the picture installed by formation is not experienced as an installation at all. It is experienced as reality — the plainest, most unarguable thing there is, the background against which everything else is figure. This is why formation reaches deeper than persuasion ever can. Persuasion argues within a person's field; formation draws the field, and what is drawn into the field as simply real is held far more firmly than anything one was ever argued into, because it was never presented as a claim that could be false.

Turn this double power toward politics and it becomes the deepest mechanism of rule, for a durable hierarchy that can reach a person in childhood sets, not two dials, but the whole instrument. It sets the benefit dial: it installs the values, and the values a hierarchy installs tend,

unsurprisingly, to coincide with the interests of those at its head, so that the population grows up wanting what keeps the arrangement standing and recoiling from what would bring it down. It draws the field of the visible: it ensures that the arrangement is not perceived as an arrangement at all but as the grain of the world, so that the alternative is not weighed and rejected but never reaches the menu, lying out beyond the horizon like the farmer's tide — and an alternative that never reaches the menu needs no defending against, because no one is choosing it down; it is simply not there to be chosen. And the hierarchy holds, besides, the means to set the cost dial, by two enforcers that work in concert. The first is the monopoly of organised violence — the sword in the hand of the state, which can punish the body, and which is the one cost that is unanswerably credible. The second, working beside it and very often reaching further into daily life, is the community: the dense social pressure that praises the one who conforms to the installed values and shames, denounces, and casts out the one who breaks them, withdrawing from the deviant the regard a person was raised to need.

These three together — a benefit column loaded toward the order, a field of the visible drawn so that the alternative does not appear, and a cost column kept full by the sword and the neighbours — are the whole apparatus of cheap rule, and the design has a quiet elegance that is its secret: the very formation that loads the benefit column and draws the horizon also installs the values by which the community's praise and shame come to bite, so that a well-formed people does not merely obey the arrangement but polices it, enforcing on one another, for free and from the inside, the values that keep it standing — and finds the thought of any other arrangement not so much forbidden as faintly unintelligible. Take Christendom for the model — the child baptised before he can consent, the parish at the centre of the world, the meaning of a good person and of who is rightfully in authority and of what the world fundamentally is all delivered as simply the

way things are, by the only authorities he has known, and kept warm thereafter by the approval and contempt of everyone around him, with the Church's sanctions and the prince's law standing behind the whole. An apex that must compel every act by force is poor and brittle; an apex that has formed its people rules cheaply, because the people now want the arrangement, cannot easily see past it, and enforce it on themselves. This is why formation is the quiet centre of the apparatus of rule — the one power that loads the benefit column, draws the field of the visible, and primes the community's enforcement, all at once, early, from the inside, and for free. But it must be said now, and the eighth part will insist on it, that formation is a baseline and not a cage: the reading it gives of a person's values is a baseline and not a verdict, and the horizon it draws is a horizon and not a wall, for a man moved to a new position may be shown a tide his formation never let him see.

PART 5

When a Cost is Real

> *That a cost bears on a decision only to the degree that a credible power will impose it and the actor believes it will fall; that this, and nothing more occult, is what a counterweight is; that where no power keeps the account, the cost column stands empty and the strong simply do as they please — and that this is the exact mirror, on the cost side, of the field of the visible on the other: what no enforcer can reach, the cost column never holds, just as what no information can reach, the horizon never contains*

The cost side carries its own caveat, the mirror of the first concerning value, and in real time it is among the first things the analyst must test. A possible cost bears on a decision only to the degree that someone is credibly keeping account and will actually make the actor pay — and that the actor believes it. The law one will never be charged under, the rule that is never enforced, the threat from a power too weak or too distant to reach you, the sanction a man has convinced himself will never fall on him: all of these enter the calculation at very nearly zero, however grave they appear on paper. This is why the identical deed is cheap for one actor and ruinous for another — not because the deed differs, but because the enforcer can reach the one and not the other, and the one knows it. The cost column is read in the actor's mind, not in the statute book, which is why belief does as much work here as reality: a real penalty the actor disbelieves will not restrain him until he is taught otherwise, and a penalty that does not in fact exist will restrain him fully so long as he believes it does — the bluff that holds is as good as a wall, and the wall a man has stopped believing in is no wall at all.

This is all that a counterweight ever is, stripped of mystification: a power that can credibly keep the account against another, and that the other knows can reach him. The whole apparatus of checks and balances, of rival powers set against one another, of the office that can call the mighty to answer, is nothing more occult than the maintenance of a credible accounting — an enforcer the strong cannot escape and know they cannot escape. And the dark corollary follows at once, and runs beneath every structural study in this project: where no power keeps the account — where the strong have grown beyond the credible reach of any enforcer — the cost column stands empty, and the strong simply do as they please. The cost column is the floor of force translated onto the individual ledger; it is full wherever a credible enforcer can reach and empty wherever none can, and the emptying of it is the opening of every door.

It is worth setting this corollary beside the one the third part drew, because the two are the same shape on the two sides of the ledger, and seeing them together is most of the method's power. On the cost side: what no enforcer can reach, the cost column never holds, and the man beyond reach does as he pleases. On the side of the field: what no information can reach, the horizon never contains, and the man whose field was drawn for him cannot even raise the question. The one is the structure of impunity, the other the structure of the blind spot, and a position is most completely commanded when both are set the same way at once — when a man both cannot be made to pay for the order and cannot see past it to imagine another. Whether one is reading a single official deciding whether the rule will be enforced against him, or a whole population formed never to see the arrangement as an arrangement, the two questions are the same pair and the answers govern the conduct together: is there, in this actor's own belief, a power that will make him pay — and is there, in this actor's own field, the thing he would need to see in order to choose otherwise.

PART 6

Reading the Position to See the Logic

> *That one rarely knows directly what a man valued or feared or could see, but one can reconstruct his position — the concrete pressures bearing on him, and the field of facts and options open to him, where he actually stood — and from the position the logic of his decision usually becomes visible; shown in Henry, in Stalin, and in Hideyoshi, whose invasion answers the theorist's single cause with a convergence of many pressures on one act*

The caveats and their readings come together in the move that is the working heart of the method, the one used on nearly every page of this project to make a decision intelligible: reconstruct the actor's position. One rarely has direct access to what a historical figure valued, or precisely what he feared, or exactly what he could and could not see; but one can usually recover, from the record, the concrete pressures bearing upon him where he actually stood — the interests, the constraints, the threats, the materials within his reach, and the field of facts and options his vantage presented — and once the position is fixed, the logic of his decision usually comes into view. The formula is deliberately modest in both its key words: if you understand a person's position, you can *usually* see the *logic* behind their decision. Usually, not always, because a man may surprise his position; and the logic behind the decision, not the decision itself, because what the position yields is the reasoning that made the act make sense from inside — an account of the choice rather than a computation of it. And the reconstruction now has two layers, not one: not

ONLY THE LEDGER OF BENEFIT AND COST AS IT STOOD FOR HIM, but the field within which that ledger was kept — what was visible to him to weigh at all.

Take Henry VIII, and fix the position. A king who needs a male heir, his marriage having produced no surviving son and his dynasty therefore at risk; and who needs money, the crown being chronically short of it; facing a Pope who will not grant the annulment, himself constrained by the emperor whose troops hold Rome. From that position the break with the Roman Church is not a theological riddle but a solution, and a doubly efficient one: it frees the king to remarry and pursue the heir, and it opens the monasteries to seizure and answers the want of money — one move that pays on both of his pressing accounts at once. The only question left is the cost: whether the emperor would punish him and whether his Catholic subjects would rise; a cost he judged bearable, and so acted. And note, in passing, what his position let him see that an earlier king's would not have: a reformist current already running through Europe, a vernacular scripture and an anticlerical temper already abroad, so that the option of a national church under royal headship was visible on his horizon in a way it simply had not been, a few reigns earlier, on the horizon of a king for whom Christendom was seamless. The field was part of the position, and the field had shifted.

Take Stalin, holding the machinery of the party after Lenin's death, and assume from his conduct before the fact that his governing value is the keeping of personal power. His position then presents two standing threats: rivals among the old Bolsheviks who hold more of the revolutionary legitimacy this order prizes than he can claim, and the awkward standing need to explain why a vanguard dictatorship promised to wither has not withered. One instrument answers both: turn the criminal-justice apparatus upon the old revolutionaries, try them as wreckers and traitors, and in the same act destroy the more-legitimate rivals and manufacture the ever-present internal enemy whose existence justifies the vanguard's permanence.

The show trials, monstrous as a moral fact and held here with that gravity, are from the position a single efficient solution to two problems at once — legible, which is not the same as justified.

And take, against the theorist who reduces every event to his own framework's single cause, the case of Hideyoshi's invasion of Korea. One school says he invaded out of megalomania, another for trade, another to dispose of his soldiers, each certain that its one key turns the lock. Reconstruct his actual position and you find not one pressure but a convergence of them, all pointing the same way: he had a vast class of idle, battle-hardened samurai who were a danger at home and needed employing abroad; he had great vassal lords who still commanded strong armies and might yet challenge him, and a foreign war would send them far away and drain their resources; he was a man of humble birth who owed everything to his own military success and needed conquest to legitimate a rule the old aristocracy resented; he carried the imperial ambition, his own and his dead lord Nobunaga's; and he needed to bind his newly and precariously unified realm against a common external enemy, and to reopen the lapsed trade with Ming China. Five or six distinct pressures, and every one of them relieved by the same act — which is not a case for any single framework but a case of overdetermination, of many pressures converging on one solution, and the convergence is itself the fuller explanation, for it shows precisely why the move was so irresistible: it paid on every account at once. The lesson for method is exact. Do not ask what the cause was and then supply your framework's favourite answer; reconstruct the position, and watch how many of its separate pressures the chosen act resolved — for the decision a man actually reaches is very often the one that solved the most of them together. And watch, too, the edge of his field, for it explains the shape of the disaster as much as the pressures explain the launch: Hideyoshi's vantage showed him a Korea to be passed through and a Ming to be humbled, and showed him almost nothing true of either the Korean navy

that would cut his supply or the Ming armies that would pour south — a horizon that made the invasion look, from where he stood, far more soluble than it was. The pressures explain why he went; the limits of his field explain why he thought he could win.

PART 7

Convergence, and Why History Rhymes

> *That the patterns which recur across history, in civilisations that never touched, are not the work of a law of history or of cultural borrowing but of position-logic at scale: that a position poses a problem, the problem has only so many good solutions, and a vantage shows only so many of them, so that people in like positions converge — a tendency and never a law, because within the narrow menu the human still chooses, and the chosen outcomes still diverge; and that a class, being many people in like positions and not a single mind, converges and fragments by position alone, never by a collective consciousness*

The reconstruction of a single position explains one decision; but the same move, applied across many people and many centuries, explains the largest and strangest fact this whole project has had to confront — that history rhymes, that the same arrangements appear again and again in places that could not possibly have copied one another, so insistently that it tempts every observer toward exactly the agent above people's heads this method began by refusing. Faced with the recurrence, the lazy mind reaches for a law of history that compels the pattern, or for a hidden line of cultural descent that carried it from place to place. Position-logic offers a third explanation. The patterns recur because a position poses a problem, the problem has only so many good solutions, and people standing in that position — running the one human engine on the materials their moment supplies — tend to find their way to the same small set of answers, independently, again and again. And there is a second convergence

FOLDED INSIDE THE FIRST, WHICH THIS VERSION CAN NOW NAME: not only does a position offer a narrow menu of good solutions, it also draws a narrow field of *visible* ones, so that people alike placed not only face the same problem but tend to see the same handful of moves as available and the same alternatives as not even present. Like positions breed like horizons. The pattern is not imposed from above and not carried in from elsewhere; it is what position-logic produces at scale — the visible sediment of many separate people seeing the same small field and solving the same problem with the same narrow menu of smart moves.

Consider the problem faced by a military strongman who has just won a long civil war and must convert a battlefield victory into a durable peace. The problem is exact and its menu is short. He must replace the discredited legitimating story of the order he destroyed with a new one; he must bind the rivals who might do to him what he did to his predecessor; he must balance a centre strong enough to rule against regions resentful of being ruled; he must extract enough wealth to sustain the state while preventing any subordinate from accumulating enough to challenge it; and, hardest of all, he must build a way to transfer power at his death that does not simply reopen the war. There are only so many solutions to each, and the proof that the position and not the culture supplies them is that two men separated by thirteen centuries and the whole breadth of Eurasia, with no conceivable channel between them, worked their way to nearly the same set. Diocletian, seizing the Roman world in 284 after the chaos of the Third Century, and Tokugawa Ieyasu, surveying the wreckage of Japan's century of civil war from Sekigahara in 1600, each built a new legitimating ideology to replace a shattered one, each issued legal codes to regulate potential rivals, each reorganised administration to hold centre and regions in balance, each devised a fiscal system that fed the state while starving would-be challengers, and each — most strikingly — staged the same audacious manoeuvre to prove his order could outlive him, voluntarily abdicating his highest office

while keeping the real power behind it, Diocletian retiring in 305 to the first willing abdication in Roman history and Ieyasu yielding the shogun's title to his son in 1605 while ruling on as the retired ogosho. Neither had heard of the other or of anything like him. They converged because the warlord's dilemma has a short list of answers and they were both intelligent men reading the same problem.

The same demonstration runs on a different problem with a different pair and comes out the same way. Consider the problem of holding together a fragmented landscape of competing local powers when no one of them is strong enough to conquer the rest, and binding them into something that can extract wealth and keep the peace without a central army to compel it. Around the year 1000, two civilisations that could not have known the other existed — the Holy Roman Empire in Europe and the Classic Maya city-states in Mesoamerica, separated by an ocean none of them could cross — arrived at the identical solution, the form this project calls the sacred decentralised polity. Both made the ruler a divine intermediary between the cosmic order and the earthly welfare of his people, so that obedience became cosmic duty rather than mere submission to force. Both vested the reading of the sacred in a specialised interpretive class that monopolised literacy and the calendar — the Latin clergy in one case, the scribal priesthood in the other — and so controlled the one channel through which the divine could be known. Both framed extraction as religious obligation rather than political coercion. Both raised monumental architecture, the cathedral and the stepped pyramid, as the propaganda of cosmic authority for a population that could not read the inscriptions. And both managed the rivalry of their many local lords through marriage, ceremony, and graduated hierarchies of honour rather than through a central command they did not possess. The Atlantic made borrowing flatly impossible; the religions shared no ancestor; the technologies and crops and writing systems were wholly unrelated. Strip away the Gothic and the glyphic surfaces and the same

political architecture stands underneath, because the solution space is narrow enough that independent discoverers converge on the same answer — the divine king is not a European notion or a Mesoamerican one but a structural solution to the problem of legitimate authority in a fragmented polity, and it appears wherever that problem appears.

It would be the easiest thing in the world to let this harden into the determinism the method exists to refuse — to say the position dictates the decision, that the warlord must abdicate and the fragmented polity must turn sacred. That is exactly the overstatement to resist, and the convergence cases themselves supply the correction, because alongside their likeness they carry a deep difference in outcome that no law could permit. Diocletian and Ieyasu faced the same dilemma and reached for the same tools, but their settlements ended in opposite fates: Ieyasu's succession held for fifteen generations and two and a half centuries, while Diocletian's tetrarchy collapsed into renewed civil war within months of his abdication. The position had narrowed the menu for both men, but it had not made the choice for either, and the choices and contexts diverged where it mattered most. Diocletian chose to construct a new state religion from the old gods and to persecute the Christianity already growing beneath him; Constantine, a generation later, chose instead to appropriate that ready-made Christianity, with its bishops and councils already in place, and so completed the stabilisation Diocletian could not; Ieyasu chose to embrace the hereditary principle and work with the grain of his culture where Diocletian had fought it. And beneath the choices lay a difference of scale no decision could override — Rome's fifty millions across three continents could not be surveilled and held as Japan's compact archipelago of some two hundred and sixty monitored domains could be. This is the exact shape of the claim, held exactly: the structure defines the problem and narrows the set of good solutions, and the vantage narrows the set of visible ones, so that like positions converge and history rhymes; but within that narrowed set the

human still chooses, and the choices, interacting with a context that varies, send the outcomes apart. The convergence is a tendency the position produces, not a law it enforces — and the proof is kept honest by the cases that never converged at all, the fragmented societies that never took the sacred form and the strongmen whose settlements simply failed, which sit at the edge of the claim to hold it short of determinism.

Turn this same logic from civilisations onto a single settled order and it yields the political consequence this project develops at length under the name of the default. In a long-lasting arrangement, the defence of one's own position is, by default, the defence of the entire structure — for to protect your wealth is to protect the property that holds it, and to protect the property is to protect the order that secures it — so that the arrangement is reproduced, tirelessly and without direction, by the ordinary self-interest of its beneficiaries, none of whom need intend the reproduction and none of whom need conspire. The convergence of a million private self-defences simply is the maintenance of the order, which is why a settled order needs no cabal and would gain little from one: the structure already does the work a conspiracy would have to do. But the absence of a standing conspiracy is emphatically not the absence of coordination. The same position-logic that makes the everyday defence automatic also makes coordination possible the moment the order is genuinely threatened, for the logic of each position makes its holder aware of a shared danger — a movement or a law that would take what he holds — and awareness of a common threat is the trigger that turns parallel self-defence into a concerted one. Then, and generally not before, the threatened look about for solutions, converge upon a plan, fund the same friends, and combine. The sequence is the thing to hold: convergence first, coordination second. What assembles is not a timeless council ruling from the shadows but a reactive convergence of many position-holders whose ledgers happen to read the same way at the same moment, gathering under threat and dissolving again into the quiet

automatic defence of default once the threat has passed. Convergence, then, is the single thread that runs through the whole method, at every scale: the pressures that converge inside one man's decision, the like positions that converge across civilisations that never met, and the threatened beneficiaries who converge into a coordinated defence — all the same mechanism, and not one of them requiring a mind set above the heads of the people.

And the sharpest confirmation that all of this is convergence and not a class-mind is what happens when a class fails to converge, which is the point at which the method parts decisively from the Marxist account, and the cases turn on the parting. That tradition distinguishes a class *in itself*, a multitude who merely share a material position, from a class *for itself*, woken into a common consciousness and acting thereafter as a single agent in pursuit of its collective interest. This method keeps the first and discards the second. A class, here, is only a name for many people in similar positions; it is never a mind and it never decides, because there is no one to do the deciding but the individuals, each reading his own ledger from his own position, and what looks from a distance like a class acting is the convergence of many separate self-defences whose ledgers happen to align. The tell that it is convergence and not a collective mind is that it aligns only so far as the positions actually do, and fragments the instant they part — for a genuine class-mind would hold together, whereas position-logic predicts that a nominal class will split precisely along the seams where its members' positions diverge, and the splitting is the proof. The German imperial elite did not stand as one behind von Trotha's extermination order, though a class reading predicts it should have, the landed and military aristocracy pursuing more land, more glory, and a subjugated labour force at a single stroke. The colony's own governor and its settlers wanted the Herero beaten and then *kept*, as labour for the farms the whole enterprise was for; senior officers and missionaries pressed against the order; the chancellor and the chief of the general staff urged that it be rescinded, the one on political and

the other on practical grounds; and the Kaiser rescinded it. They did not fragment because their class interest had dissolved. They fragmented because each read the one enterprise from a different position — the field commander, the resident governor, the settler, the strategist in Berlin, the sovereign answerable to opinion at home — and the same undertaking handed a different ledger to each. Yet let a movement arise that threatened the holdings of all of them at once, and the same scattered men would converge within the week, each alerted by his own position and none needing a word from any other — and then coordinate in earnest, fund the same friends and back the same champions, without ever having become a class woken into a single mind. The method predicts the convergence and the fragmentation alike, draws both from the single fact of position, and needs a mind above the heads of the men for neither.

PART 8

Values Can Change, and So Do Horizons

> *That formation is a powerful baseline and not a cage: that people convert, and when a person's values change his whole reckoning of benefit and cost changes with them and his conduct follows — and that, more readily even than his values, his field of the visible moves, for a man set in a new position is shown a new world and may lose sight of an old one, so that the method remains a lens and a tendency and never an iron law, and the analyst must keep asking not only whether the values he reads are the values now held, but whether the world the actor once saw is the world the actor sees*

Everything said so far would harden into the very determinism this method began by refusing, were it not for the fact that anchors the whole instrument and keeps it human: values can change. If formation fixed a person's values once and for all, then formation would be destiny, people would be the calculators the method has insisted they are not, and the reading taken from a man's upbringing would be a verdict rather than a baseline. But they are not calculators, for the plainest of reasons — they are human — and the proof stands everywhere a person comes to want what he was never raised to want. Formation supplies a powerful baseline; what arrives first, and is kept warm by community, is genuinely hard to dislodge, and that is why the baseline is worth so much. But a baseline is not a cage, and the clearest demonstration is the convert, and among the sharpest of converts is the revolutionary.

The Marxists were not formed as Marxists. There was no parish of the dialectic to baptise them in the cradle; they were raised, overwhelmingly, in conventional faiths and traditional societies, in the values of the very orders they would later set out to overthrow. And somewhere, through some collision between their position and the account of the world they had been handed, they grew disillusioned, ceased to hold the values their formation had installed, and took on new ones — a new picture of what was right, of who was the enemy, of what a just order and a good life would be. And the manner of their conversion quietly refutes the very thing their own theory would later credit: they did not wake as a class into a single mind, but converted one at a time, each through his own particular collision — the doctrine of class-consciousness made, ironically, by individuals re-forming their benefit columns one by one, and not by any class at all. The instant the values changed, the whole engine recomputed. The same man, in the same position, now weighed benefit and cost on a wholly different scale, and so acted differently: he risked what he would once have guarded, scorned what he would once have pursued, and came to value the revolution his own fathers would have died to prevent. Nothing in the mechanism altered; only the contents of the benefit column were exchanged. This is why the method reads conversion not as a mystery but as a re-setting of the dial, and why it can hold both halves of the truth at once — that formation runs deep enough to explain most conduct most of the time, and that it is not a wall, because the values it installs can be lost and others gained.

But there is a second changeable thing the older statement of the method did not track, and the part on the field of the visible obliges this version to add it, because it moves more readily even than values and accounts for a great deal that a value-reading alone will misjudge: a person's horizon moves when his position moves. Values are hard to change because formation installs them early and community keeps them warm; but the field of the visible is redrawn every time a person is set somewhere new,

because the new position simply shows him things the old one never did. The apprentice who becomes a master sees the trade from the other side; the provincial who comes to the capital is shown a scale of the world his village never contained; the official promoted into the room where the holding-cost is paid is handed, for the first time, the tide that the part on awareness described; and the farmer who at last takes to the water learns, in a season, what a mile inland a lifetime never taught. None of these has changed his values; each has changed his world, because he has changed his place, and the field opened or narrowed accordingly. And it narrows as well as opens: a man moved into a confined position can lose sight of what a wider one once showed him, the horizon contracting as surely as it expands, so that a person may come to not-see what he formerly saw, not through any failure of character but through the plain fact of where he has been put. The most common change in a person, over a life, is not the dramatic conversion of his values but the quiet, continual redrawing of his field as he moves from position to position through the world.

For the analyst reading a living person, this doubles the final discipline of the changeable, and it is what keeps the method honest against its own best tools. Formation gives the baseline of the values; but you must ask whether the man before you still holds what he was given, or has somewhere exchanged it — because if he has, his whole reckoning has changed with it, and the baseline you began from is now only the place from which to measure how far he has moved. And formation gives, too, the baseline of the field; but you must ask, just as hard, whether the world he was first shown is the world he now sees — because a man moved to a new position may be reading a field his formation never drew for him, seeing tides it hid or blind now to shores it once showed, and a decision priced against the wrong field will read as cleanly false as one priced against the wrong values. This is the precise point at which a too-tidy reading goes wrong twice over, mistaking a baseline of value for a destiny and a baseline of vision for a fixed horizon,

and it is the precise point this method refuses to let go, because the changeability of both — what a person wants and what a person can see — is not a flaw in the instrument but the very humanity of the thing it is built to read.

PART 9

The Discipline, and What it is For

> *What keeps so flexible an instrument honest — reading the value and the field alike from evidence laid down before the act, treating a deviation from a known formation as a window into the values now held, holding open beside the sincere and the cynical a third reading, the honest but blinkered, and remembering that the analyst himself judges from a position, his hindsight a vantage no actor on the board ever had; shown in the students who carried a doctrine home from Paris, one who applied it to catastrophe and one who broke from it for his people; and what the method is, in the end: not a tidy theory that has solved its subject, but a way of making even the most terrible act legible, held as tested, not revealed*

An instrument this flexible is in obvious danger of explaining everything and therefore nothing, and the disciplines that guard it have grown, in this version, from two to a handful, all of them species of one rule: read from evidence laid down before the act, never from the act itself. The first is the oldest. The value must be read from evidence prior to the deed, never inferred backward from it. The lazy way is to look at what a man did, name the value that would have made him do it, and call the deed explained — but that is a closed circle that fits every outcome and predicts none; the honest way is to establish, from his formation and his words and the shape of his life before the deed, what he valued, and only then to see whether the deed follows. The part on the field of the visible adds a second discipline of exactly the same form, and it is at least as important: the actor's *horizon* must also be read from evidence prior to the

act — what could he, from where he stood and when he stood there, actually have known and seen — and never silently backfilled with what the analyst knows now. To convict a man of folly for not acting on a fact that had not yet reached his shore, or of wickedness for not choosing an option that lay beyond his field, is to make the same closed-circle error on the side of knowledge that the first discipline forbids on the side of value. Reconstruct the field he had, not the field you have.

The third discipline turns the first into a positive tool, and it is the most powerful reading the method has when a person's formation is known: treat a deviation from that known formation as a window into the values he now actually holds. When a person formed in a doctrine acts exactly as the doctrine commands, his conduct is consistent with sincerity but also with cynicism, and the two cannot yet be told apart; but when he departs from the doctrine, the direction of his departure is a window, for it shows what he was willing to break the doctrine for — and whether that was his own advantage or something he valued above both the doctrine and himself. But here the new dimension obliges the method to hold open a third possibility beside the sincere and the cynical, one a value-reading alone would miss: the honest but blinkered. A man may act against neither his values nor his interest but against the world, doing harm he did not intend and cannot see, because his field never contained the thing that would have shown him the harm. The sincere man does what he believes right; the cynic does what serves him; the blinkered man does what looks right and serviceable from inside a field too narrow to show him otherwise — and the three are distinguished not by the act, which may be identical, but by reading the value and the field together, before the fact. To collapse the blinkered into the wicked is the commonest injustice the analyst commits, and the field is what guards against it.

This project found the window most sharply in the men who carried a doctrine home from Paris. Across the early and middle twentieth century

the French Communist Party served as the institutional incubator of a Jacobin-Marxist synthesis, and the colonial students who passed through its study circles absorbed not merely a theory but a whole apparatus of practice — the mobilisation of a population for forced transformation, the tribunal, the doctrine that terror is the instrument of virtue. The method's instruction is to take the Paris formation as the baseline — these men were installed, in a particular place and a particular cell, with a particular doctrine and a particular field of the visible — and then to watch what each did with it. Khieu Samphan was awarded a doctorate by the University of Paris in 1959 for a thesis arguing that the bankers and merchants and bureaucrats of Cambodia's cities produced nothing and merely parasitised the value made by those who worked the land. Years later, in power, the movement he served enacted that thesis with total and pitiless consistency: it emptied the cities at gunpoint, abolished money and markets and schools, drove the whole population onto the land, and in the four years that followed something on the order of a quarter of Cambodia died, the figure contested and held here in its full and terrible range. He did not deviate from his formation for his own advantage; he applied it, to the end, against every signal that it was failing — which reads not as a cynic using a doctrine but as a true believer executing one, a man who valued the doctrine above the evidence and above the lives, his thesis academically honoured and rigorously implemented and built upon a false premise. The field here does not soften the reading but sharpens it: a doctrine of that kind does its worst precisely by drawing the field so that the catastrophe it produces cannot be seen as the doctrine's doing, so that every starved village reads, from inside, as sabotage or insufficient zeal rather than as the predicted fruit of the policy — and the man who will not step outside the field his doctrine drew, even as the dead pile against its edge, has crossed from the blinkered into the culpable, because the evidence was by then beating on the horizon and he chose the doctrine over what it was, belatedly, showing him.

Aimé Césaire is the opposite reading of the same instrument, and the one that surprised the analyst, who leans by long habit toward the cynical guess. Formed in the same Paris communism, Césaire deviated from it — advocating the departmental integration of Martinique in 1946, and then breaking openly with the French Communist Party in 1956 — and every one of his deviations cut against his own standing among the revolutionaries whose regard a man in his position would ordinarily guard, and toward the concrete welfare of the people of his island. The direction of the deviation was the window: a man breaking from his doctrine at a cost to himself, and always in the same direction, reveals a value he holds above both the doctrine and his own advantage, and in Césaire's case that value, read from his life and not from any single outcome, was the welfare of his people. The cynic would have broken the other way, toward power; Césaire broke toward his island, and paid for it.

There remains one discipline the others all point toward, and it is the one the new dimension presses hardest, because it is turned not on the subject but on the analyst himself. The analyst, too, occupies a position, and his position has a field of the visible like any other — and the historian's position is a peculiarly treacherous one, because it grants him a sight no actor on the board ever had: the sight of the whole, after the fact, with the outcomes known and the roads not taken greyed out and the dead already counted. From that late and privileged vantage the actor's choices look stupider, or more wicked, or more obvious, than they could possibly have looked from inside the position where they were actually made, because the analyst is reading them against a field — the completed picture — that was flatly unavailable to the person who chose. This is the deepest error the method exists to forbid, and it is an error of position exactly like the ones it diagnoses in others: the analyst mistakes the edge of his subject's field for the edge of the subject's intelligence or virtue, when it was only the edge of the subject's position, a position the analyst has the rare and distorting luxury

of standing outside and above. The whole discipline of reading the field from prior evidence is, in the end, the analyst's defence against his own hindsight — the continual, effortful refusal to convict a man for failing to see what only the analyst, standing where no contemporary could stand, is able to see.

This names, at last, what the method is and is not for. It is not a tidy theory that has solved its subject, and it must not be mistaken for one. The wanting of a tidy key — one clean turn that opens every door — is exactly the wanting that produces the agents above people's heads this method began by refusing, for every providence and class-mind and invisible hand is a tidy answer purchased by subtracting the human. The method offers no such tidiness. What it offers instead is legibility: a position, a formation, a field of the visible, and a ledger, once honestly reconstructed, make even the most terrible act legible, showing the human logic where others see only madness or monstrosity. The emptying of Cambodia's cities, looked at from outside, is a pure eruption of cruelty from which nothing can be learned; fix the position, the formation, and the field, and it becomes terribly legible — not the work of a monster of a special kind, but of an educated, credentialed man working the logic of a doctrine and a position out to its end inside a field that doctrine had drawn to hide the result. The horror is not for an instant made smaller, and the men are not for an instant excused; legibility is not pardon. But the act is made intelligible, and that is the whole of what the method promises, and it is the necessary first step toward seeing where such a logic runs to ruin and must be stopped. Debug, do not defend. For the great patterns this project calls the shape of power are only what ordinary human beings, standing in positions, deciding by what they were formed to value and by what they can credibly be made to pay, within the fields their positions let them see, add up to when the picture is seen from far enough away — and the distance is the only thing that ever made them look like fate. The method claims no more than it can hold: not what a

person will do, but the logic available from where he stands; not a law, but a tendency; not the heart, which it cannot read, but the position, which it can — the value, the cost, and now the field of the visible, the three things a position fixes and the three an honest reading must recover. People are not robots; two people in one position may choose oppositely; values change and horizons move; the lens shows the logic and never the verdict. And that modesty — baseline and not destiny, position and not heart, tendency and not law — is not the weakness of the method but its truth, the exact shape of the only honesty available about creatures who decide for themselves, from where they stand, by what they can see. It is held, like everything in this project, as tested, not revealed.

Position Logic is the method beneath the volumes of the Patterns of Power series — the statement of how every study in the project reads a human decision: from the position, never the heart; by the value, the cost, and the field of the visible that the position fixes; as a tendency the position lights and never a law it dictates. This version promotes to the centre of the method a recognition the project's theoretical papers had only set down in passing — that a position gives a person his epistemology before it gives him his options, drawing the horizon of what he can see as surely as it sets the ledger of what he can weigh — and threads it through the whole. The framework and its vocabulary are thomas J. Bryan's, worked out across a long collaboration; the research, the verification, the structure, and the composition are Claude's. It is offered, like the method itself, as tested, not revealed.